

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings, and all prior versions, of claims in the application.

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Original) A friction stir welding method, comprising:

preparing plural members, each having projections at end portions of a plate that protrude toward a direction of thickness of the plate;

butting an end portion of the plate against an end portion of an adjacent plate, wherein the thickness of the plate of at least one member is different from the thickness of the plate of another member, and the protruded height of the projections on the plates at a butt joint portion where the plate thickness is large is smaller than the protruded height of the projections on the plates where the plate thickness is small, and the protruded height of the projections on the plates at a butt joint portion where the plate thickness is small is larger than the protruded height of the projections on the plates where the plate thickness is large; and

inserting rotary tools of the same size with the same insertion depth to the plates from the side having the projections, and performing friction stir welding.

2. (Currently amended) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein

said members are hollow shape members; and

each of the hollow shape members comprises two substantially parallel face plates, connecting plates connecting the two face plates, and projections formed at width-direction-end portions of each of the hollow shape members member.

3. (Withdrawn) A group of shape members for friction stir welding, comprising:

plural shape members each having projections at end portions thereof;

the plural shape members butted against each other to form plural butt joint portions to be subjected to friction stir welding; wherein

the protruded height of the projections at the butt joint portion where the plate thickness is large is smaller than the protruded height of the projections where the plate thickness is small, and the protruded height of the projections at a butt joint portion where the plate thickness is small is larger than the protruded height of the projections where the plate thickness is large.

4. (Withdrawn) The group of shape members for friction stir welding according to claim 3, wherein

the thickness of the shape members including the projections and the plate are the same for all the shape members in the group.

5. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein said plural members include at least three members, the three members butting end portions so as to provide two butt joint portions between adjacent members of said three members, wherein plate thicknesses of the adjacent members at one of the two butt joint portions is thinner than the plate thicknesses of the adjacent members at the other of the two butt joint portions, and with the three members having projections at the butt joint portions, the protruded height of the projections on the plates at the butt joint portion where the plate thickness is small is larger than the protruded height of the projections on the plates where the plate thickness is large.

6. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 5, wherein said projections extend above faces of the plates only at the end portions of the plates.

7. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 6, wherein, of the three members, the first and third members sandwiching the second member, the first and third members respectively have thicker and thinner plates, and the second member has a plate thickness equal to the plate thickness of the first member adjacent the first member and has a plate thickness equal to the plate thickness of the third member adjacent the third member.

8. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 7, wherein the protruded height of the projections of the first and second members adjacent each other is the same, and the protruded height of the projections of the second and third members adjacent each other is the same, the protruded height of the projections of the first and second members adjacent each other being smaller than the protruded height of the projections of the second and third members adjacent each other.

9. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 5, wherein the rotary tools are inserted simultaneously into the two butt joint portions, and perform simultaneously to the two butt joint portions the friction stir welding.

10. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 5, wherein the rotary tools are inserted in sequence into the two butt joint portions, and the friction stir welding is performed on the two butt joint portions in sequence.

11. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 5, wherein total thicknesses of the plates and projections at each of the end portions of the first, second and third members are the same.

12. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein said projections extend only at said end portions of said plates.

13. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein total thicknesses of the plates and projections at each of said end portions are the same.

14. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein said rotary tools are inserted simultaneously into the butt joint portions so as to simultaneously perform the friction stir welding at the butt joint portions.

15. (New) The friction stir welding method according to claim 1, wherein said rotary tools are inserted in sequence into the butt joint portions so as to perform the friction stir welding at the butt joint portions in sequence.